

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR US PN CI
SUBJECT: CHILEAN SENSITIVITIES ON PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

1. AS PRINTED HERE, UPI JULY 18 REPORTED THAT "TIME" MAGAZINE IN ITS JULY 25 ISSUE LISTED CHILE AS AMONG THE WEST COAST COUNTRIES "SUGGESTING THAT THE USG INSIST UPON A GUARANTEE OF NEUTRALITY AND FREE ACCESS TO THE CANAL INCLUDING THE USE OF FORCE SHOULD IT BE NECESSARY." (THE ACTUAL WORDING OF THE "TIME" STORY WAS MORE INNOCUOUS.)

2. ON JULY 21 THE GOC FOREIGN MINISTRY CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT IT HAD ASKED "THE USG TO USE FORCE TO GUARANTEE FREE ACCESS TO THE CANAL" SINCE CHILE SUPPORTED THE PACIFIC SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES AND REJECTED THE THREAT OF THE USE OF FORCE IN NEGOTIATIONS. THE STATEMENT REPEATED THE BASIC CHILEAN MIDDLE-GROUND POSITION, SUPPORTING PANAMANIAN ASPIRATIONS THROUGH A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT BASED UPON CURRENT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE EIGHT POINT KISSINGER-TACK AGREEMENT, PARTICULARLY THOSE ASPECTS "SAFEGUARDING THE OPERATION
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OF THE CANAL IN BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY." AN "EL MERCURIO" EDITORIALIST TOOK THE REACTION A STEP FURTHER JULY 26: "IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT A SERIOUS MAGAZINE, SUCH AS 'TIME' PUBLISHED IN THE US, WOULD RUN THESE UNSUBSTANTIATED STORIES... UNDOUBTEDLY WE ARE DEALING WITH A MANEUVER OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA AS PART OF ITS INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST

US."

3. 3. COMMENT: THE GOC'S INTEREST IN KEEPING THE CANAL OPEN IS NO SECRET. INDEED, SENATOR W. SCOTT FOUND CHILEANS AGAINST "TURNING THE CANAL OVER TO A MARXIST PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT." IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, CHILE HAS REFRAINED FROM GETTING INTO THE CANAL ISSUE AND MAINTAINED A CAREFULLY BALANCED STANCE. THE QUICK REACTION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN THIS CASE SHOWS HOW PRECARIOUS THAT BALANCE IS FOR A COUNTRY LIKE CHILE.
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Message Attributes

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